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CALL ME FOR YOUR FREE COPY OF THIS YEAR'S:
Laws For Seniors • Laws For Children • Education Laws
Environment Laws • Major Public Acts
Laws Detering Crime • Laws for Businesses

MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES

Across the state, working men and women are logging in longer hours and still finding it difficult to earn a living and support a family in a state with a high cost-of-living. To help folks earn a living wage, we increased the state's minimum hourly wage to \$7.40 effective January 1, 2006, and \$7.65, effective January 1, 2007. These gradual increases in the minimum wage reflect the real cost-of-living for working families across the state. (PA 05-32)



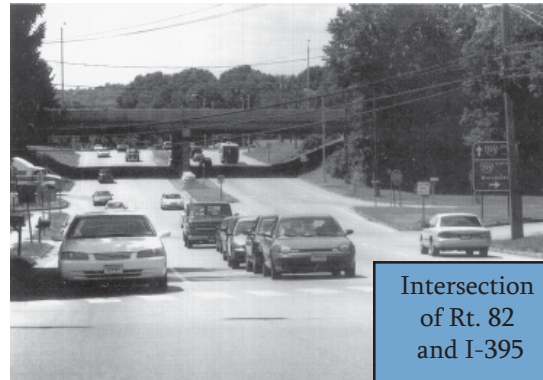
HANDS FREE CELL PHONES

Beginning October 1, drivers must use hands-free technology when operating a motor vehicle, with certain exceptions. Drivers are permitted to turn a cell phone on and off and dial and answer cell phones manually. While responding to an emergency situation, drivers may use either a hand-held or hands-free cell phone. In addition, drivers may no longer use text messaging devices, pagers, personal digital assistants, video game devices, laptop computers and digital cameras while driving. This is a very important safety measure for all our drivers and their passengers. (PA 05-159)



I-395/Rt. 82 Project

Our redesign project remains on target. The relocation and right-of-way process is well underway. This has been a sensitive process, and we must be sure that our neighbors are satisfied in the negotiations. As I write this note, the DOT is finishing the design of the drainage system. The next step is to finalize DEP applications and permits. This project remains a priority of DOT, and we all look forward to its completion.



Intersection
of Rt. 82
and I-395

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46th District



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Melissa and Rep. Walter
Pawelkiewicz at Eastern
Connecticut Fire School



Melissa and Rep. Jack Malone
with Larry and Max Goldman
in the House Chamber



Melissa speaking to
Lorna Coons

STATE REPRESENTATIVE MELISSA OLSON

VICE CHAIR - PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE

46TH DISTRICT • NORWICH *Capitol News*
Working for Norwich

Dear Neighbor,

I am proud of the progress we have made for Norwich this year! The 2005 session of the General Assembly was one of our most successful years, particularly in light of the budget deficits and falling revenue. The budget we passed had a significant focus on Norwich and Eastern Connecticut. Here are some of the highlights:



Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Fund Grant.

We succeeded in increasing the impact aid received from the state. We increased Norwich's **impact aid as a host community** from a pro-rated \$500,000 per year (we typically received about \$300,000) to a permanent and guaranteed \$750,000 per year. This is an increase of at least \$450,000 every year!

We also secured an **increase in our yearly distribution from the Pequot Fund**. The distribution is based on anticipated increases in revenue. For FY '07 eastern Connecticut will receive an additional 1.6 million dollars out of the increase. This will result in an increase to our current distribution, which in FY '05-'06 is \$2,271,046.

This is the most progress we have ever made in increasing Norwich's share of the Pequot Fund, and it is because of the hard work of the eastern Connecticut legislative delegation, the support we have from our leadership, and you, our constituents.

I will continue to fight to increase our share and to make the additional distribution permanent. We have momentum on our side, as well as the attention of leadership. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Melissa

Representative Melissa Olson: Making a Difference

HEALTHCARE

Insurance Coverage for Infertility Treatment

One of my main priorities this session was to author and pass legislation to ensure that infertile couples would have coverage for treatment of the disease of infertility. We achieved success! Coverage will now be provided with reasonable limitations based on age, number of cycles of treatment and efficiency of treatment. Now over 70,000 Connecticut couples suffering from infertility will have new hope. (PA 05-196)



Melissa speaking on the floor of the House

Saving Husky Benefits

One of our most significant accomplishments this session was the reinstatement of HUSKY A benefits to adults who serve as parents or guardians of children receiving HUSKY medical coverage. Over 200 families in Norwich alone would have lost healthcare if we had failed to act. Access to healthcare is one of our most important public health issues, and it is fundamental to the welfare of our children and the growth of our economy. (PA 05-280)



Cost of Drugs Decreasing

Prescription drug costs continue to be one of the biggest costs Connecticut seniors and families must bear, and they are driving up the cost of health insurance coverage. In response, a working group has been established to study the feasibility of developing a prescription drug purchasing program or joining an existing program that enables Connecticut residents to purchase less expensive drugs from pharmacies out-of-state. The goal is to evaluate current programs, assess safety and quality assurance of out-of-state purchasing, and determine if these programs would truly make prescription drugs more affordable. A report on the findings must be submitted to the General Assembly by January 1, 2006 so that we may take immediate action. (PA 05-280)

Health Insurance Programs for Small Businesses

With health insurance costs for small businesses increasing and access to health insurance coverage decreasing, the General Assembly passed **Public Act 05-238** to provide greater flexibility in insurance policies, savings to small businesses, and increased access to the MEHIP program, which allows the state and association group plans to pool rates. MEHIP benefits are now extended to individuals eligible for retirement benefits and to federally qualified non-profits that receive public funds or contract with the state and labor unions.

Supportive Housing

Public Act 05-280 implements the second phase of the "Next Steps" Supportive Housing Initiative by providing up to 500 additional units of affordable housing to persons with mental illnesses. This initiative, which is funded through mortgages, tax credits, and grants, is available to people or families affected by psychiatric disabilities and chemical dependency, or who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.



ENERGY

Low Income Energy Assistance Program

The home heating assistance program is a necessity for so many of our neighbors. This state program distributes federal funding for heating based on need. I learned that the funds were distributed unfairly, leaving many who have electric heat out in the cold. I championed legislation, which instructs the Department of Social Services to achieve equity in the initial payment received by hardship consumers, regardless of the type of energy used in the home. I am proud of the passage of this legislation and the help it will bring to those in need. (PA 05-123)

Low Income Energy Advisory Board

The state has created a low-income energy advisory board to implement energy assistance programs and inform DPUC as to how energy rates will affect consumers. We secured a seat on the board for a representative from the Norwich Department of Public Utilities. We are the only city represented! This will ensure that our voice is heard and energy policy will be shaped by our experiences. (PA 05-204)



EDUCATION

NORWICH HAS BEEN NAMED A PRIORITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Because of the increased demands on our school district, Norwich has been named a **Priority School District**. This means that our school readiness grant will increase, and we will receive the funding **in addition** to our education cost-sharing grant. Our priority school district funding is estimated at a yearly payment of \$2.1 million dollars. The grant must be dedicated to programs designed to improve our children's school readiness. For example, expanding extended-day kindergarten programs, expanding early reading intervention programs, increasing after school programs, summer tutorial, enrichment and recreation programs, and creating or expanding programs related to drop out prevention. This is an important increase in funding for our schools and will assist us in our pursuit of academic excellence.



STATE BUDGET FOR NORWICH

	FY 05-06 Estimated	FY 05-06 Governor's Proposed Budget	FY 05-06 Final Agreement With Legislature
Education Cost Sharing Grant	\$27,218,195	\$27,762,559	\$28,138,332
Mashantucket Pequot/Mohegan Fund	\$2,058,540	\$2,271,046	\$2,271,046
Town Aid Road Fund Grant	\$163,323	\$163,323	\$228,915
Adult Education	\$348,458	\$405,025	\$405,025
Total Statutory Formula Grants	\$32,918,203	\$33,386,095	\$33,904,128
Increase from FY 05 estimates		\$985,925	
Increase from Governor's Budget		\$518,032	

BONDING FOR NORWICH !

- + Ross Adult Day Care to receive \$350,000 for renovations and expansion
- + The Norwich Harbor District Project to receive \$1,500,000
- + The Martin House to receive \$700,000 for expansion

For more info call me at 800-842-8267 or e-mail me at Melissa.Olson@cga.ct.gov